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THE WASHINGTON POST
13 March 1982

Senate Conducts Its Own Probe Of Latin Unrest

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The Senate Intelligence Committee is conducting an independent review of a number of intelligence matters relating to Central America, and the committee's vice chairman, Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D-N.Y.), has endorsed a proposal to issue an unusual report on the region to the Senate.

The comprehensive review was first requested on March 4 by Sen. Patrick J. Leahy (D-Vt.) to determine whether intelligence information reaching policymakers in the Reagan administration is adequate and whether it proves administration assertions of Soviet and Cuban involvement in the region. The review also would provide senators better information about U.S. covert operations in Central America, Leahy said.

The committee staff began a full-scale intelligence review last week and on Monday the committee members will discuss whether to report to the Senate and to the public.

Monday's closed session will resume a detailed examination of intelligence that the administration maintains shows an alarming military buildup in Nicaragua and a Nicaraguan-supported arms supply line to the guerrillas in El Salvador. CIA Director William J. Casey, who conducted an initial three-hour briefing

Feb. 25, is scheduled to return Monday.

Following Casey's appearance, committee chairman Barry Goldwater (R-Ariz) issued a press release in which he said, "The briefing left no doubt that there is active involvement by Sandinista government officials in support of the Salvadoran guerrilla movement."

Leahy said yesterday that Goldwater expressed concern that the oversight committee not get involved in debating the administration's foreign policies in Central America. But, Leahy said, Goldwater expressed no opposition to compiling an objective and factual record of the intelligence data that could be supported by all members of the committee.

Another official said there was some concern among committee Republicans that a full-scale intelligence review of Central America could politicize the committee, which traditionally has avoided partisan politics in order to have a greater impact on executive branch intelligence operations.

Goldwater was in New York and could not be reached for comment.

"It may well be that such a report would be written in five parts, with volumes one, two and three made public and volumes four and five classified, but that would also be a major help," said Leahy. "Then, whatever debate there was on the policy down there could be stated with a certain touchstone, something the senators know they can talk about in public."

Moynihan, the committee's vice chairman and ranking Democrat, said Leahy's letter to Goldwater "was sent with my knowledge and concurrence," adding that he thought the report was "something the committee should do."

Rarely in its history has the committee issued a report to the Senate on intelligence matters. The last major report was issued during the 1978 debate on the Panama Canal Treaties.

The Reagan administration this week began a series of highly unusu-

al public displays of intelligence data to buttress its case that Nicaragua is serving as a command and control base for the guerrilla insurgency in El Salvador.

Also this week, The Washington Post reported that President Reagan had authorized covert operations against Nicaragua with a CIA-supported paramilitary force of Latin Americans, who are to operate out of commando camps spread along the Nicaraguan-Honduran border.

The White House has officially declined to comment about the covert operations, but senior administration officials have confirmed to the three major television networks the presidential authorization for the paramilitary force.

CBS News quoted sources saying that the CIA would use no U.S. citizens to direct the paramilitary force in the field.

ABC News reported that the commando force would comprise former members of elite U.S. military units and would engage in highly sensitive intelligence collection and demolition work.

NBC News said it had authoritative confirmation of the paramilitary force and quoted one White House official as saying the president was not especially upset about news leaks on the covert operations because the reports convey the president's determination to counter what he considers aggression in Central America.

The Reagan administration this week briefed a number of Democratic leaders and officials of former administrations on the classified intelligence relating to Nicaraguan activities.

Leahy said the administration appeared to be lining up "public relations" testimonials from these officials. "It may be a nice, courteous thing to do, but insofar as we [the Senate] are the ones who are going to vote on these matters—not the former government officials—it might be more relevant to have us informed," Leahy said.